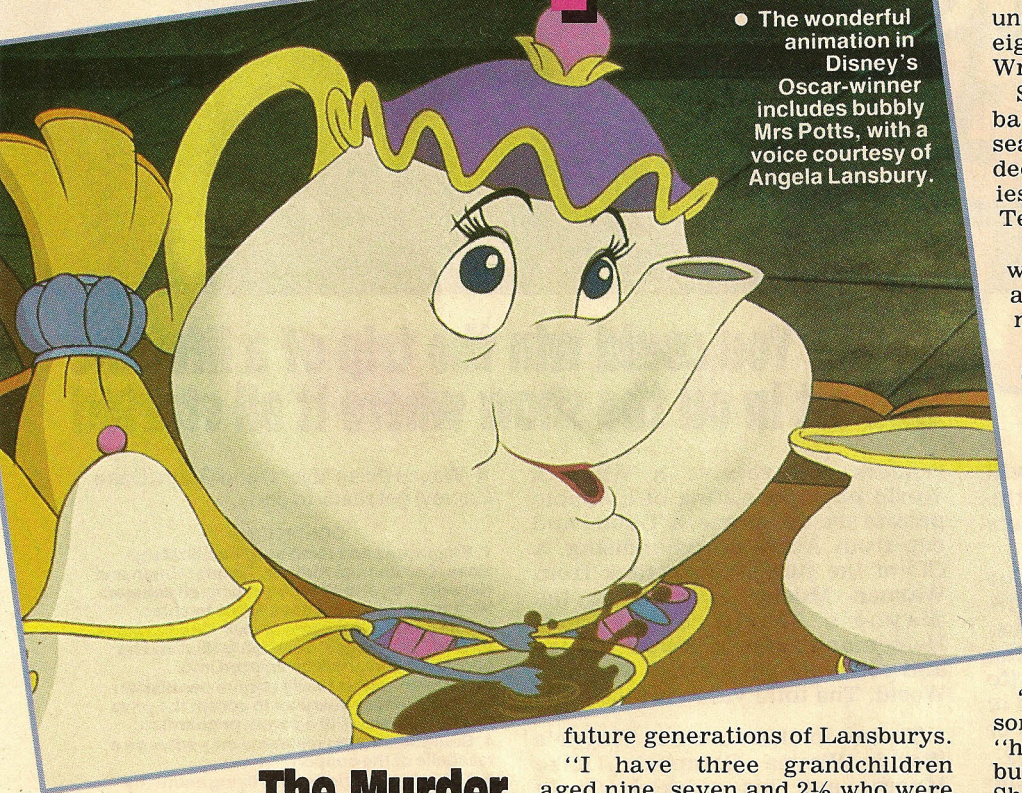


'I've never played a teapot before'



● The wonderful animation in Disney's Oscar-winner includes bubbly Mrs Potts, with a voice courtesy of Angela Lansbury.

The Murder She Wrote star brews herself an exciting new role

ANGELA LANSBURY has a new character now making her even more famous than the beloved Jessica Fletcher in Network Ten's *Murder, She Wrote*.

But don't expect to see her well-known face on screen.

In Disney's *Beauty And The Beast*, one of the most successful animated films ever, she lends her voice to a key character, the bubbly teapot Mrs Potts.

Angela got a chance to relive her musical days on Broadway by singing the title song in the movie, which won an Academy Award this year, and leave something for

future generations of Lansburys.

"I have three grandchildren aged nine, seven and 2½ who were ripe for *Beauty And The Beast*, so that was a big factor in my decision to do it," Angela tells TV WEEK.

"I thought it would be nice if one day they could hear their great-grandmother in this lovely Disney movie and know my voice."

In the timeless tale of *Beauty And The Beast*, Mrs Potts is the housekeeper of the castle in which the beast lies in wait for a woman who will fall in love with him and break the spell which turned him from a prince into a beast.

"Mrs Potts was exactly the fat, comfortable little lady I had envisioned," Angela, 67, says.

"Although I've never played a teapot before, I played characters like Mrs Potts — Nellie Lovett in the Broadway musical *Sweeney Todd*, and Mrs Bridges in *Upstairs Downstairs*."

Angela has a warmth and sense of humor which makes it easy to

understand why she is, after eight seasons of *Murder, She Wrote*, TV's first lady.

Surprisingly, after cutting back her workload in the eighth season, she decided to be more deeply involved in the new series, now screening on Network Ten at 8.30 pm Tuesday.

"We've come to the point where it is a matter of choice and has nothing to do with money," she says.

"But the show wasn't as successful last year, so I knew I had to really be in it in all 22 shows, probably on screen for 90 per cent of the time. I've never worked so hard in my life!"

A star as far back as the Forties, with films such as *Gaslight* and *The Picture Of Dorian Gray* to her credit, Angela says *Murder, She Wrote* is "the gold ring" of her career.

"I was always trying to do something better," she says, "hoping to catch the gold ring, but it turned out to be *Murder, She Wrote*. I hate to walk away from something that is such a pure success."

Being TV's first lady is a far cry from the days when that medium threatened her career.

"I had a very bad time then," she recalls.

"We had to shift from being movie actors to go into live TV, and that was like going back to theatre."

"It was lean pickings in those days — even Bette Davis was having trouble finding a role."

"I had been under contract for seven years with a big studio, and suddenly I wasn't any more. You never knew where the next job was coming from."

Today — after collecting four Tony Awards, and being nominated three times for Academy Awards and 10 times for Emmy Awards — Angela is far from insecure.

"But we all suffer from the thing



"And I feel a responsibility to a tremendous number of women who had been swept under the carpet — retired women who had wonderfully fruitful lives and made tremendous contributions to society and who suddenly didn't count any more," she says.

"They weren't in the polls or in ads, and then *Murder, She Wrote* came along and, suddenly, I became an important role model."

The show is produced by Angela's company Corymore, run by her husband Peter Shaw, who has other projects in development for Angela during her hiatus from the series.

6 I hate to let go of a sure thing and step off into the abyss 9

"I'd like to make an adventure movie, like Harrison Ford's films," she says, smiling.

So, can we expect to see a swashbuckling Angela surrounded by special effects?

"It would be fun to do a sort of female *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* with a rather middle-aged woman in the lead," she says with a chuckle, winking as she adds: "Not a very middle-aged woman, just rather middle-aged!"

*From Jenny Cooney
in Los Angeles*

of 'will we ever work again?' and that's why I hate to let go of a sure thing and step off into the abyss," she says.

"I know in my heart of hearts that I will always work if I want to. It's just up to me to decide how hard I want to work!"

Beauty And The Beast was a "delightful departure" from television but Angela feels a responsibility to the nosy mystery writer Jessica Fletcher.

● Behind every successful woman . . . Angela and her husband and manager, Peter Shaw.

